

# **BEDFORDSHIRE AND RIVER IVEL INTERNAL DRAINAGE BOARD**

## **Board Meeting**

**Minutes of the Board meeting held on 1 June 2020 at 2pm at Vale House, Stewartby.**

**PRESENT:** D McMurdo (Chairman), A D Brown, J R Davison, S Dixon, F Firth, D Hodgson, S Jarvis, C McHugh, M Nawaz, M Robins, J Russell, J Sampson, J Scott, B Spurr, T Turner.

**IN ATTENDANCE:** B Agass (Chief Executive & Clerk of the Boards), J Oldfield (Director of Operations), N Souter (Accountant) and A Smith (Committee Clerk)

**ALSO IN ATTENDANCE:** M Bright & J Molyneux (Bedford Borough Council)

### **1 AMENDMENTS TO STANDING ORDERS PROVISIONS FOR HOLDING MEETINGS REMOTELY**

The Chairman explained to members that due to the Covid-19 situation it is not currently possible to hold meetings in person. In view of the circumstances the Chairman of the Board requested approval from the relevant Minister to make amendments to the Board's Standing Orders by adding two additional rules to add provisions to allow for business and decision making to continue remotely. The amendments consist of adding the additional rules by way of paragraphs 28 and 29.

**Members approved the amendments to Standing Orders provisions for holding meetings remotely.**

**2 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE** were received from B Huckle and R Morris.

### **3 DECLARATION OF MEMBERS' INTERESTS**

There were no declarations of interest.

### **4 MINUTES OF THE BOARD MEETING HELD ON 10 February 2020**

**The minutes of the Board meeting held on 10 February 2020 were accepted as a true and accurate record for the Chairman to sign.**

### **5 MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES**

There were no matters arising.

**6 CONFIRMED MINUTES OF JOINT MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 21 APRIL 2020**

**The Chairman presented the confirmed minutes which were noted.**

**7 UNCONFIRMED MINUTES OF JOINT MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 19 MAY 2020**

The Chairman presented the unconfirmed minutes to the Board and explained this was an unscheduled meeting due to COVID-19.

**Members noted the unconfirmed minutes.**

**8 WORKS PROGRESS REPORT 2019/20 AND WORKS PROGRAMME 2020/21**

The Director of Operations presented the Progress of Works report for April 2019 to March 2020, he added that although we have faced some downtime due to COVID-19 most of the planned works have been completed.

**Members accepted the Progress of Works Report for the Works Programme 2020/21.**

Discussion took place:

The Chairman asked when the remainder of the work would be completed. The Director of Operations explained this work has been carried forwards into next year's programme, the time scale would dependent on the location and the nature of the work being carried out. Workforce members are being phased back to work following government guidelines and contracts have been prepared to involve contractors earlier than usual to keep on top of the forthcoming programme.

The Chairman questioned if particular attention was paid to high priority sites including for example Stotfold due to the recent prolonged spell of dry weather. The Director of Operations explained that all programmed work for Stotfold had been completed and the Board are continuing to provide support to the area throughout the lockdown. Local residents are also proactive in checking hotspots and reporting any problems in areas such as Brook Street culvert.

**9 TECHNICAL REPORT**

The Director of Operations presented the Technical Report. He explained the three drainage Legal Agreements (Marsh Leys, Culvert 6, and Ponds D&E) are all signed and awaiting completion details to be finalised.

The Fields Road (south) Wootton commercial development has been identified as a priority area by Bedford Borough Council, the Board has worked alongside solicitors and developers solicitors to expedite.

The Chairman expressed disappointment in reporting there had been little progress on the Stewartby Park legal agreement.

### **Members accepted the Technical Report.**

#### **Stewartby Park**

The Chairman asked for this to be escalated, as previously agreed if there wasn't a resolution by March legal action would be taken. The Chief Executive confirmed that a considerable amount of time had been allowed to seek to reach agreement and that the Board may now have no alternative but to proceed with more formal action in an effort to draw the issues to a conclusion. Solicitors will be instructed accordingly to progress action. The Chairman reminded members the development work had already taken place.

#### **Pix Brook, Standalone Farm Reservoir**

One member questioned if the fault with the sensors raise cause for concern? The Director of Operations explained it causes slight concern that the full storage capacity of the reservoir isn't being optimised however, as they are locked in a raised position it provides safe protection to Stotfold and Arlesey downstream. The gates are currently in a fail-safe position.

#### **King's Ditch, Bedford**

Members raised the following questions-

- "Work being completed during the summer holidays" members questioned if this was still planned due to the current situation.
- Members would be keen to receive confirmation of funding contribution from Bedford Girls school.
- Members were concerned the original estimates seem to have increased. The Director of Operations advised members that the original estimate was derived in 2015 and was based on a like for like pumping capacity to match the Board's tractor pump and the costs were high level estimates In order to obtain Environment Agency approval and the development of an outline business case. The figures quoted were based on broad assessment and outline designs.
- Members queried the operational costs as the pump will be used infrequently. The Director of Operations explained these are negligible for both however there are pros and cons to each option. Although a higher maintenance cost would be anticipated with a diesel pump. Members asked for a full breakdown of costs for both options to make an informed decision.
- Due to the location of the pump and environmental impact of diesel, should the Board be favouring the alternative electric pump as indicated by the retained consultant?
- One member asked for confirmation on security of access to the pumping station if the Board was to take on the ownership of the footprint of land. The Chairman agreed this would need to be a prerequisite. The Director of Operations confirmed any access

requirements would need to be included in a legal agreement with the school. Members will be provided with a location plan for clarity.

- Members asked for clarity on the legal liability that comes with the ownership of the footprint of land.

**It was proposed that as the next formal Board meeting was scheduled for November, in order to progress this issue:**

- **an additional report would be drafted by the Director of Operations including benefits/issues associated with both diesel and electric pump options and cost comparisons for consideration by a subgroup of the Board.**
- **A subgroup would be formed of the JMC members of the Bedfordshire and River Ivel Board**
- **The Board agreed the subgroup would have delegation to determine and agree whether the proposed pumping station would be powered by diesel or electric.**

**Members agreed this proposal.**

## **10 STAFFING, GOVERNANCE & RESOURCES**

The Chief Executive presented the report. She explained during the COVID-19 outbreak in line with Government and NHS guidance and in consultation with the Chairman of each of the three Boards revised working arrangements have been established following government guidelines to maintain essential operations and protect staff:

- Employees who can do so are working remotely from home with access to systems, responding to enquiries, issuing consents and planning comments electronically.
- The main office number is operational and telephone enquirers can continue to call during office hours enabling a response to any calls.
- Operationally maintenance of highest risk assets and essential activities have been prioritised and non -critical activities reduced to maximise and deploy the available workforce in the most appropriate way.

It was explained that the Director of Operations had been assessing the safe return to work for both the workforce and officers to help to develop a Covid – secure environment and would be kept.

Members were advised that at the current time the workforce was operating at reduced capacity.

The Chairman added that although the workforce was at a reduced capacity essential maintenance continued to be carried out.

**Members accepted the report.**

## **11 INTERNAL AUDIT - TO RECEIVE THE ANNUAL INTERNAL AUDIT REPORT 2019/20**

The Chief Executive presented the report of the internal auditors, TIAA, the overall assurance assessment was **substantial assurance** which indicated good accounting practices and corporate governance, risk, and control processes.

There were 2 recommendations categorized as 'Routine' and 3 recommendations categorised as 'Operational' priority action points and which had been implemented or scheduled for implementation.

One of the recommendations included a review of the Risk Management Strategy and Policy which was due to take place on 21<sup>st</sup> April however due to COVID-19 had to be postponed. The Chief Executive confirmed this was due to be rescheduled and the internal auditor would be in attendance to assist with this process.

**Members accepted the Annual Internal Audit Report 2019/20.**

## **12 TO APPROVE THE REVISED FINANCIAL REGULATIONS**

The Chief Executive presented the Financial Regulations which had been revised to reflect new roles within the organisation. The changes (shown in red) had been discussed and approved by the JMC.

**Members approved the revised Financial Regulations with changes outlined.**

## **13 TO APPROVE THE REVISED RISK REGISTER**

The Chief Executive presented the Revised Risk Register which had been reviewed by the JMC at its meeting on 21 April 2020. The changes to the Risk Register, already approved by the JMC, were shown in red.

**Members approved the updated Risk Register dated April 2020.**

## **14 FINANCE**

### **(i) To approve the Finance Report as at 31 March 2020**

The Accountant presented the finance report which showed receipts and payments through the Board's individual bank account, a cheque/direct debit list showing payments and investment and bank accounts balances.

**Members approved the Finance Report as at 31 March 2020.**

### **(ii) To approve the Financial Statements for the year ended 31 March 2020**

#### **Income and Expenditure Statement as at 31 March 2020**

The Accountant presented the Financial Statements for the year ended 31<sup>st</sup> March 2020.

### **Balance Sheet as at 31 March 2020**

The Occupiers Rate Fund was currently £999,225 and the Board were holding Capital development funds of £2,580,179.

**Members approved the Financial Statements for the year ended 31 March 2020.**

#### **(iii) To approve the Annual Governance and Accountability Return 2019/20 Annual Governance Statement**

**Members approved the Annual Governance Statement 2019/20 (answering questions 1-8 in the affirmative) for the Chairman and Clerk to sign.**

#### **iv) To approve the Annual Governance and Accountability Return 2019/20 Accounting Statements**

**Members approved the Accounting Statements 2019/20 for the Chairman to sign.**

### **15 TRANSFER / OWNERSHIP OF ASSETS**

The Chief Executive presented the report and explained to members the Boards have historically taken on ownership of assets to enable effective maintenance however , the catchment area is subject to significant growth and development it is timely to review the practice of assuming ownership if there are occasions when the Board's requirements can be met through an alternative solution to ownership by detailing conditions as part of the deed of consent process for example.

It was acknowledged that each situation requires consideration and that it would be beneficial to develop criteria to guide future decision making.

Discussion took place-

Members were in agreement that the paper should look at the degree of disparity between what was received as a commuted sum and how that has grown and changed with inflation over time. Members felt that in the past where commuted sums have been accepted based on modelling and commuted costs, the money has been invested with negligible returns and the costs have increase with inflation over long periods of time.

The Director of Operations reminded members that as a Board we have a general duty to look after the drainage district with the ability of raising drainage rates. The commuted sum is there as a buffer the rate raising ability and has been carried out based on the Marston Vales Surface Water Plan for a number of years.

The Chairman added that the Board needs to ensure we aren't over committing to potential revenue costs in years to come.

The Chief Executive suggested that an element of future proofing should be incorporated to legal agreements to ensure adequate funding arrangements are in place via commuted

sums incorporated into legal agreements with provision for indexing over the period of any agreed maintenance period.

**Members agreed for a paper to be drafted for consideration by the Joint Management Committee at its October meeting.**

#### **16 CONSULTATIONS, WORK UPDATES, IDB NEWS**

The Chief Executive presented the report and added a response has been received from ADA regarding the byelaws progress. DEFRA have asked to revisit the byelaws and review in due course. A timeline has been requested to understand how long this may take and when this will be passed to ministers for approval. Officers will continue to liaise with ADA on this.

#### **17 ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

**Water Resources-** One member questioned the IDBs involvement with the Oxford to Cambridge Arc work relating to water resources and the study that Water Resources East played a key role in. The member felt it was a strategic and important piece of work which looked at considering surface water as an overall water resources package. The member wondered if the IDB would be engaging in the study.

The Chief Executive explained members of the engineering team have joined these discussions and helped provide feedback. They are currently awaiting the next phase of discussions, however agreed it would be helpful to discuss the study in further detail with the member outside of the meeting.

#### **18 DATE OF NEXT BOARD MEETING – 16 NOVEMBER 2020**

The meeting closed at 3:30pm.